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ABSTRACT

Rural Radio (RR) in Dahomey has a radio network that covers most of the national territory with two transmitters plus 4KW short wave. The program themes are suggested by an advisory group from interested ministries such as Education, Youth and Sport, Agriculture, Health, etc., but the primary objective of the project lies in promoting dialogues for common village decisions and improvement projects. Under the Ministry of Information, the project has grown rapidly in recent years to include 600 clubs, each of which has a maximum of 31 members. A club is maintained by the two technicians, an animateur and an encadrew. They hold weekly meetings and discussions, provide the technical information for village projects, and send in a monthly written report to RR. A project proposal recently made to the World Bank gives the cost estimates of an expanded educational radio project, but expanded production facilities alone cannot be a solution. Feedback and coordination between RR personnel and village groups, RR and the Ministry of Information, and the different ministries should be improved in order to meet local needs of special ethnic and geographical groups. (CH)

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RURAL RADIO IN DAHOMEY: September, 1972 by Emile G. McAnany

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Dahomey: area: 43,636 sq. miles[1]
population: 2,795,000 (1971)
languages: Fon (60%), Yoruba, Bariba, Dendi, Pulaar, Gourmantche-Moba, French
educational language: French

Media situation:

Television: A television station is being built in Cotonou and will be opened in November to coincide with the French president Pompidou's state visit. This is a "gift" from France like the one also being built in neighboring Togo and in theCentral African Republic. Since Dahomian geography is flat on the coast, the signal will reach about a hundred miles inland. It was reported by some persons that the government did not want such a gift because it would commit them to an expensive and not very useful technology. By all estimates, the station will not only be an expensive and useless luxury, it will not even reach any but the French-speaking minority in Cotonou and the cities of the coastal region.

Radio: Dahomey has a national radio network that covers most of the national territory with two transmitters (50KW medium wave) plus 4KW short wave. There are three broadcast periods a day: 6-9 a.m; noon-2:15; and 5:15-11:15, or about 11 hours of programming daily. Most broadcasting is done on FM for Cotonou and Abomey-Calavi areas and short wave on a second transmitter for one hour 15 minutes five days a week from 6:15 to 7:30 p.m. for rural radio; FM also continues in this period.

1. Source: BREDA-STAT, Selected Statistical Data on 35 Countries of Sub-Sahara Africa. Dakar: UNESCO Regional Office, 1971.

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Information/educational programs:

1. Teachers: programs for teachers in primary/secondary once a week in French;
2. Instruction: French program for grammar and pronunciation for teachers and pupils;
3. Parents: program for parents once a week in French; (all above made by Institut Nationale de Pedagogie);
4. Women: one hour each morning, six days a week, in French, Yoruba, Fon, Bariba, Dendi, Pulaar;
5. Rural radio: one program of 30 minutes each week most of the year, translated into 10 local languages and broadcast in two languages each day from 6:30-7:30 p.m. (languages: Fon, Woma, Adja, Yoruba, Dendi, Ditamari, Bariba, Mina, Pila-pila, Puehl).

Status of Rural Radio, September, 1972

The following paragraphs are based on a visit to Dahomey in September, 1972 of about one week by two members of the Institute. Names of people interviewed and documents used in the report are found in Appendices A and B.

Dahomey was late in getting started on a kind of rural radio forum that was introduced in neighboring Togo four or five years previous to the creation of Rural Radio in 1968. In comparison with Togo, Dahomey still is behind its neighbor in technical equipment (Togo had a 100 KW transmitter in 1964, Dahomey installed a 50 KW in 1972), and in the number of radio clubs (Togo is reported to have as many as 1,400 while the number in Dahomey optimistically is only 600 for its estimated 1,800 villages).

Nevertheless, the Dahomey project has grown rapidly from 1968 to 1972 to include 600 clubs with perhaps as many as 12,000 to 15,000 members, as well as many home listeners.

Objectives: The government began with regular farm broadcasts in 1967 but decided that this was not enough. When it created the radio clubs in 1968, it echoed the goals of most other farm forum projects in the past in Africa as well as India and Canada. That is, the government said that because agriculture was vital to the development of Dahomey (90% agriculture) and because the development plan will not work without the cooperation of the rural masses, it wishes to create a means of presenting information about the plan and its implementation and hear the people's reaction. The word dialogue is invoked frequently; common village decisions and improvement projects are the goal.

The objectives are defined for each radio club more concretely as follows: to understand modern agriculture techniques and to apply them in the village; to improve nutrition, child care, and health in the village; to understand the national development plan and have positive dialogue with the government and through all of these actions to achieve better national prosperity.

Structure and organization: The Rural Radio group (RR) consists of 12 Dahomians and two technical experts from the FAO (a German and a Swiss). RR is directly under the Minister of Information, but has its offices in and works closely with the national radio station. A program of 30 minutes is created each week, treating several themes of practical

use in the villages. This common program is translated orally by five announcer-interpreters into ten local languages for broadcast Monday through Friday (one hour per day). These same people look at and try to deal with letters coming from listening groups in their respective languages. They also act as interpreters in field contact with local listening groups.

Advisory groups from interested ministeries such as Education, Youth and Sport, Agriculture, Health, etc., help choose and develop programming themes. Advisory groups at the six departmental levels are the promoters of the formation of clubs in their areas. At an even more grass roots level, it seems that the agricultural expert in the sub-prefectures (the basic political subdivision of the country) is a most important factor in starting and continuing the clubs.

Each club has an animateur chosen from the village group as well as an encadreur or village level agricultural worker (who has finished primary school plus a year's training in agriculture). In each club there is a maximum of 31 members chosen from working adults (including women, though many clubs de facto do not have women members). A radio is given to the animateur who holds weekly meetings in a school or other community locale, leads the discussion that follows the broadcast, and sends in a monthly written report to RR in Cotonou. The encadreur is the technical resource person to answer questions and guide village projects that are to be the fruit of discussions and group decisions.

One notices that the structure is very much like that of the Canadian and Indian rural forums with common themes and a common spirit for the whole country translated into local languages. Village clubs

seem to reflect local social organization with the dominant members of the village also members of the club. Information relevant to greater agricultural productivity, health and community development is presented in broadcasts and groups are expected to discuss it and turn this information to immediate practical use in the form of village projects like planting cotton in rows, building an access road, or giving children higher protein food after weaning. Feedback is encouraged in the form of monthly written reports from the encadreur (since many animateurs are illiterate), as well as letters with questions to the RR production group. The questions generally deal with more information about one of the suggested themes presented in the programs or how a village can deal with the problems of implementation of the information.

Financing: No exact information was given on the finances of RR, but the cost elements of the project would include the salaries of the FAO experts, the 12 Dahomians in production, several secretaries, a chauffeur and car, office space, programming material, printed matter, transmission time, 600 radio sets, etc. It was not clear how expenses were met or that RR even had a separate budget within the Ministry of Information (although it was clear that the two foreign experts were paid by the FAO). From interviews with RR people, one gets the impression that money was generally short and little was available, for example, to have any regular RR employees as feedback agents in the field.

A proposal to the World Bank made by the project in December, 1971, gives some cost estimates of a much-expanded educational radio project.

The proposal asked the World Bank to finance a new radio station dedicated exclusively to education. A 50KW short wave transmitter was deemed necessary to cover the country (the present 4KW short wave is in poor condition and does not give adequate coverage of the population). The transmitter was estimated to cost around $300,000; equipment for two new studios was estimated at $77,700 with about $9,000 annual maintenance cost. Annual operating cost for 17 full-time and 6 part-time people plus materials was estimated at $64,889, and transmission costs would be $57,777.[2] Thus, the annual operating cost would be $122,666; the fixed cost investment might be about $350,000 to $400,000. Such a proposal would envisage a complete educational program by radio that would include not only rural radio but instructional broadcasting to schools, women's programs, health, etc. One possible objection to such a proposal might be that the new 50KW medium wave transmitter just installed should be better utilized for educational purposes. Presently, national radio carries about 12 hours of educational programs of the 75-80 hours a week, or about 10% of the total. Some might argue that the national radio service should reflect the educational needs of the country more in their programming and that perhaps as much as 30% of the programs be devoted to strictly informational-educational programs.

Evaluation Results: There have been some ongoing efforts at both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation consists of the feedback efforts that help the project function better, but this

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2. At current exchange rate of 225 CFA to the U.S. dollar.

depends heavily at present on the written monthly report from the encadreur or animateur and the letters from village groups. There was, in addition, a survey in late 1969 of 150 club members in 30 villages. Results showed both problems and accomplishments. These problems, along with others recognized by RR personnel, may be summed up as follows: lack of response-feedback to village questions (people like to hear their questions answered by name on the radio, but with 600 groups this becomes difficult, if not impossible); little or no personal contact by RR personnel with village groups (again, a size factor); not enough programs dedicated to women; villages too poor to pay for replacing batteries; lack of permanent leadership among Dahomians for the RR group; creation of more radio clubs.

To this one might add several problems that were observed on the visit. There is an obvious lack of coordination between RR and CAVIEP[3] (the Audio-visual Center of the Ministry of Information in Porto Novo). Without trying to sort out the personal reasons for this situation, it is obvious that the fleet of eight Landrovers, fully equipped with projectors, loudspeakers, screens, etc., belonging to CAVIEP should be combined with RR to establish not only the mass media but also the personalized media contact that could make the efforts of rural development much more effective. If such coordination existed, the conservative estimate of how many villages could be reached is 1,000 of the 1,800 villages in the entire country each dry season (eight months). Even if the visits were not concentrated in the 600 radio club villages, there

3. See Appendix C for brief description.

could be important personal contact and feedback at least once a year for all clubs, and this could be an important strengthening of the present program.

Another coordination problem that is endemic to media projects is coordination among the different ministries such as Agriculture, Health, Education, Youth, etc. There are two problems here: first, one gets the impression that the radio group is making information programs that are independent of many of the ongoing rural programs of the different ministries. Whether this is due to RR or other ministries is not as important as recognizing that the problem exists. Second, even when there is coordination with ministries, there seems to be misunderstanding on the part of these ministries as to what the function of radio is. If farmers are urged to use fertilizers on their crops, it is not enough to convince them it is a good thing. They need local agricultural advice from the extension agent and often need the means to buy the fertilizers. RR has the problem of being asked to help villages materially. Proper coordination would allow referral of these requests to government or other agencies who can take care of these needs.

As far as summative evaluation is concerned, one can return to the objectives outlined earlier. In sum, there is an emphasis in this project on providing useful information for practical application in the village to improve daily life. The 1969 survey tried to estimate the number of community improvements that were directly attributable to the radio clubs, but such efforts get into a problem of attribution of complex

social causality which demands far more time and sophistication than was available at that time. The annual RR contest for outstanding accomplishments in radio club villages also focuses on measuring results. In 1972, for example, there were several hundred entrants in the contest, and a national jury visited many of the finalists in each department to judge progress made during the last year. Criteria were the relative accomplishments of villages in improving crop production, roads, schools, health facilities, etc. Although no formal evaluation of this kind has been made, the methodology and means to do so are not impossible.

Conclusions. Within the limits of the radio club project in Dahomey, a great deal of improvement could undoubtedly be made with ingredients of increased money and personnel. However, the current structure of this project is such that even with the proposed separate educational radio station, such input would only increase the number and perhaps the quality of educational-informational programs reaching rural audiences and not directly affect several outstanding problems of feedback and coordination. RR is experiencing much the same problem that India had in expanding its Rural Radio Forum,[3] i.e., with a growing number of groups and a single centralized production center, feedback and interaction between sender and receiver becomes more and more difficult. Expanding production facilities and not the field liaison personnel cannot solve the feedback problem. Nor does an expanded facility necessarily mean that programs will be more localized to the needs of special ethnic and geographical groups. An expanded facility might be

3. Wilbur Schramm. "Ten Years of Radio Rural Forum in India" in New Educational Media in Action: Case Studies for Planners. Paris: UNESCO/IIEP 1967, vol. 1.

a good addition if RR at the same time were coordinated with the considerable potential of the audiovisual center of CAVIEP for making direct contact with villages.

The second problem not touched on by simply expanded production facilities is one of coordination within the Dahomian government itself. Proper leadership of RR or a separate educational radio station might improve the radio project, but it may place demands on the government that it cannot meet at this time. It is true that if the government had placed a higher priority on the rural information program, it would have given greater support to the present project and devoted more of its current broadcast time to such programming than the current 10% level. Government policies for the rural areas reflect the way political leaders have defined the development problem. Radio as a means can only reflect and coordinate this plan among the various ministries. This is necessary to achieve objectives as defined and practiced by the government. If plans do not meet the real needs of the rural areas, radio cannot solve these needs independently. Thus, the problem of RR is not only one of better production but of better organization for villages also; it may be able to do something about this. Secondly, it has a problem of coordination over which it may have little control.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

People Interviewed

1. Mr. Prosper Dagnon, director, CAVIEP, audio-visual center, Porto-Novo.
2. Mr. Michel Bakinde, Rural Radio staff.
3. Mr. Paul Daniel, FAO expert, Rural Radio staff.
4. Mr. Karl Grammelpacher, FAO expert, Rural Radio staff.
5. Mr. Benjamin Tohoun, encadreur, village of Dadohoue, Dept. of Mono.
6. Mr. Aimee, UNESCO expert for Young Farmers Clubs, Ministry of Agriculture.
7. Mr. Ross, USIS, U.S. Embassy, Cotonou.
8. Assistant Director, Peace Corps, Dahomey.

Appendix B

Documents

"Rapport succint du deuxieme cours sur les techniques de communication en milieu rural." Source not cited. August, 1971.

Paul Daniel. "Rapport au government du Dahomey sur la radio rurale du Dahomey." Rome: FAO report No. AT2631, 1969.

_____. "Rapport d'activite" (annual activity report from Daniel for RR). No. 4 (1969), No. 5 (1970) and No. 6 (1971), Cotonou, 1970, 1971 and 1972 respectively.

L. A. Guedegbe Atayi and M. P. Ahidote. "Compte rendu de tournees du jury national 'Operation radio progress, 1972'." Cotonou, July 27, 1972.

"Radio clubs du Dahomey: Livret de l'animateur." n.d. Cotonou: Impimerie Centrale.

"Rapport a l'intention de la Banque Mondial sur les possibilities de creer une deuxieme chaine educative." Radio Rural, Cotonou, December, 1971.

R. M. Marathey. "Togo: Radio educative." Paris: UNESCO April, 1965.

Various other documents are in files but are not cited here.

Appendix C

Rural Radio Topics, July-October, 1972

N.B. Each half hour program has two themes, about 5-10 minutes to answer mail and sometimes a slogan; there are usually two separate programs each week, each translated into five local languages. Where themes are common for both, they are not listed separately.

Cotton care
Cotton planting
Spreading fertilizer
Why vary your diet
Treating cotton
Spreading fertilizer on cotton
What to do in case of snake bite
Early care of rice
Fishing in the lagoon region
Protecting cattle in rainy season
Pudding for the baby
Caring for cotton
Mineral fertilizer for coconut trees
Interest in cashew nuts
Gardens in rainy season
Problems with cotton care
Crop rotation
Care in using insecticides
Fishing for the Tilapya
Harvesting and sorting corn
Harvesting and drying rice
Artificial meadow lands
Peanut raising
Corn and peanut raising
Harvesting and drying tobacco
Interest in collective listening groups
Weeding and caring for cotton
Sticking with village saving and credit groups
Taking care of rice
Conditioning the Karite nut
How to run a cooperative
Feeding cattle in dry season
How to avoid malnutrition in young children
Eating non-refined corn meal
Treating cotton
School cooperatives
Polishing rice
Cooperative profits

Appendix D

The Audio-visual Center, CAVIEP, at Porto Novo

The audio-visual center, called CAVIEP, is located in Porto Novo, Dahomey's second largest city about 25 miles east of Cotonou. A part of the Ministry of Information, it has a director, Mr. Prosper Dagnon, plus a staff of 23. These include a writer, a photographer, a filmmaker (16 mm.), a designer, five animateurs (with different language backgrounds to act as interpreters), five drivers, a secretary, an accountant, an electrician, and a projectionist. The purpose of the center, begun in 1967, is to educate and stimulate rural people to develop their villages; the main means for this education will be audio-visual techniques, including photography and films, printed materials, displays, posters, etc. The center is to cooperate with various government agencies working in rural areas to provide audio-visual support to rural campaigns. The 1972 budget for materials and operating expenses (exclusive of salaries) was about $10,000 (2,500,000 CFA). Besides audio-visual equipment -- cameras for still and motion pictures, stencils, etc. -- the center owns a fleet of eight Landrovers, a donation to Dahomey in 1970. These vehicles are fully equipped with audio-visual supplies, two microphones, a portable generator, a 35mm. slide projector, a 16 mm. film projector, two screens, a tape recorder, and a loud speaker system. Present plans call for contacting 250 experimental villages once

every other month. The plan would be to have five of the eight Landrovers on the road for 25 days a month and visit one village each day. Educational films would be shown to the village as soon as it became dark, while other educational work would be carried on after the group's arrival early in the afternoon. The CAVIEP group would explain the latest rural information campaign plans and prepare villagers for any new activity. After the educational films, the CAVIEP group would sponsor some form of entertainment for the village in the form of a dance or an entertainment film.

The critical problems that CAVIEP has suffered so far are the lack of a sufficient budget to keep the Landrover fleet operating plus serious problems of coordination with projects of other ministries.